

Building Blocks for Baby Brain Power

Scientific research has shown that by age 3, a child's brain has reached almost its adult size. That's important to know, because your baby's brain is growing a lot in a short time.

The experiences your child has at such a young age shape his or her knowledge, skills and personality for years to come. That's pretty incredible when you think about it.



So what are the building blocks for baby brain development?
And what can parents and caregivers do to ensure healthy brain growth?



The five “building blocks” emphasize:

Invest your time in providing your baby with loving, engaging, safe and healthy experiences as he or she grows. The payoff is a child with a head start on becoming the best person he or she can be.

Safety. Protect your baby from falls and unhealthy sleeping positions. Place your baby on his or her back, never on the stomach, to sleep. Keep your child safe by not smoking or using drugs and alcohol. Always support your baby's head as his or her neck muscles are weak. And use safety-approved car seats.

Touch. Your baby enjoys the warmth of being held and cuddled. Touching matters. Studies have shown that babies who are not frequently touched have brains that are smaller than normal for their age. Loving touches promote growth in young infants.

Speech and Hearing. The best way to wire your baby's brain is to talk to him or her often. Respond to your baby's sounds. Tell your baby what you are doing as you bathe, dress, and feed him or her. Hearing your voice helps your baby learn how to talk. Sing songs often. Teach your baby the sounds animals make.

Vision. A smiling face and frequent eye contact make your baby happy. Stare into your child's eyes. Respond to the baby's coos, babbles and other sounds. When your baby smiles at you, smile back. Follow your child's gaze and explain what is being seen. Read books with large and colorful pictures.

Comfort. Helping your baby feel at ease can be challenging with constant crying. A baby cries to communicate a lack of comfort. He or she may be hungry, wet or hurting. Maybe your face or touch is needed. Soothe the baby with gentle tummy or back rubs. If fed and changed, but still crying, pick up the baby. If you feel frustrated, place the baby in the crib and walk away to calm down.

Never shake the baby!



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1-800-552-7096 Virginia Child Abuse Hotline (language line available)

800-Children (800-244-5373) Parent Helpline